An Honest Boy

This book includes two stories, "An Honest Boy" and "A Magic Cart".

"An Honest Boy" tells how in ancient times a king chose his successor from among the children of his country. He announced that all the children of his country were to come to his palace to get a flower seed. The child who could grow the flower that the king liked most would be his successor. Hearing the news, the children rushed to the palace to get the flower seeds. Song Jin got the last one. He planted it in a pot and took good care of it, but it did not sprout. When the date for choosing the winner arrived, the children all came with beautiful flowers in their hands. Only Song Jin's flowerpot was empty. But the king was very pleased with Song Jin's honesty and chose him to be his successor. It turned out that the seed Song Jin had received from the king had been cooked.

"A Magic Cart" tells the story of Lingling. While Lingling was on her way to collect firewood for her ailing mother, she saved the life of a rabbit. So the rabbit gave her a cart drawn by eleven horses as a gift. She was driven to a beautiful place where she collected a cart of firewood, picked a bunch of flowers, and caught a carp for her mother. On the way home she met an old woman whose daughter was very ill. Knowing that the things she had could save the daughter's life, Lingling gave the old woman her firewood, her flowers, and the carp. But the rabbit presented her with another cart of firewood, another bunch of flowers, and another carp to take home to her mother.

An Honest Boy

Adapted by Jiang Zhenli
Illustrated by Hu Yongkai

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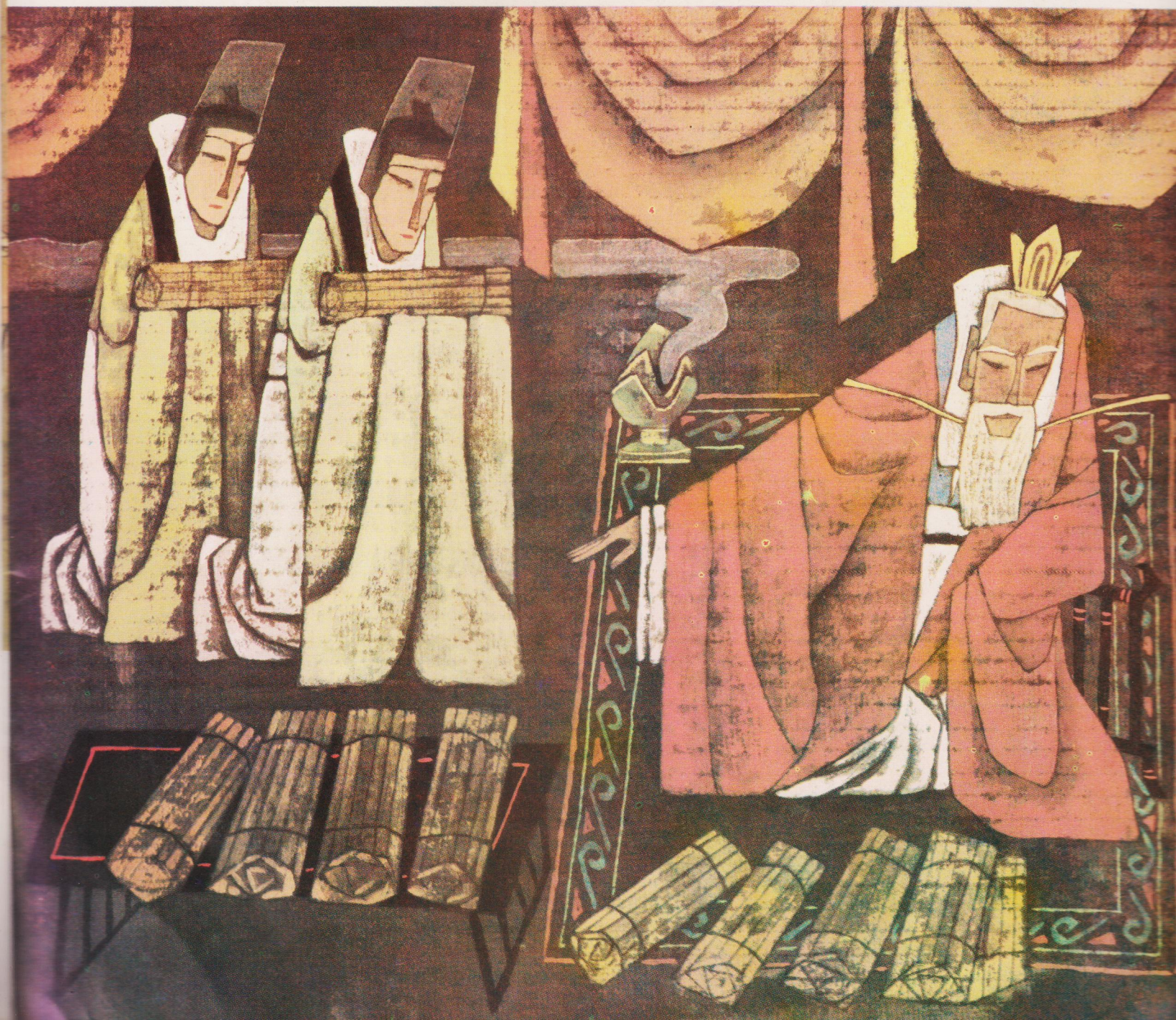
In ancient times, there was a small country in the south where people were fond of flowers. They planted flowers everywhere, and the land looked like a sea of flowers and the air was sweet with the scent of flowers all the year round.

The king of that country also liked flowers very much. Even though he was king, he tended his garden every morning and evening.

As time went by, the king became old: His eyes turned farsighted; his hearing was lost; and his walk became unsteady. His days as king were numbered. He decided to choose a successor.



But who would his successor be, and how should the selection be made? As a flower lover, he decided to let a flower choose.

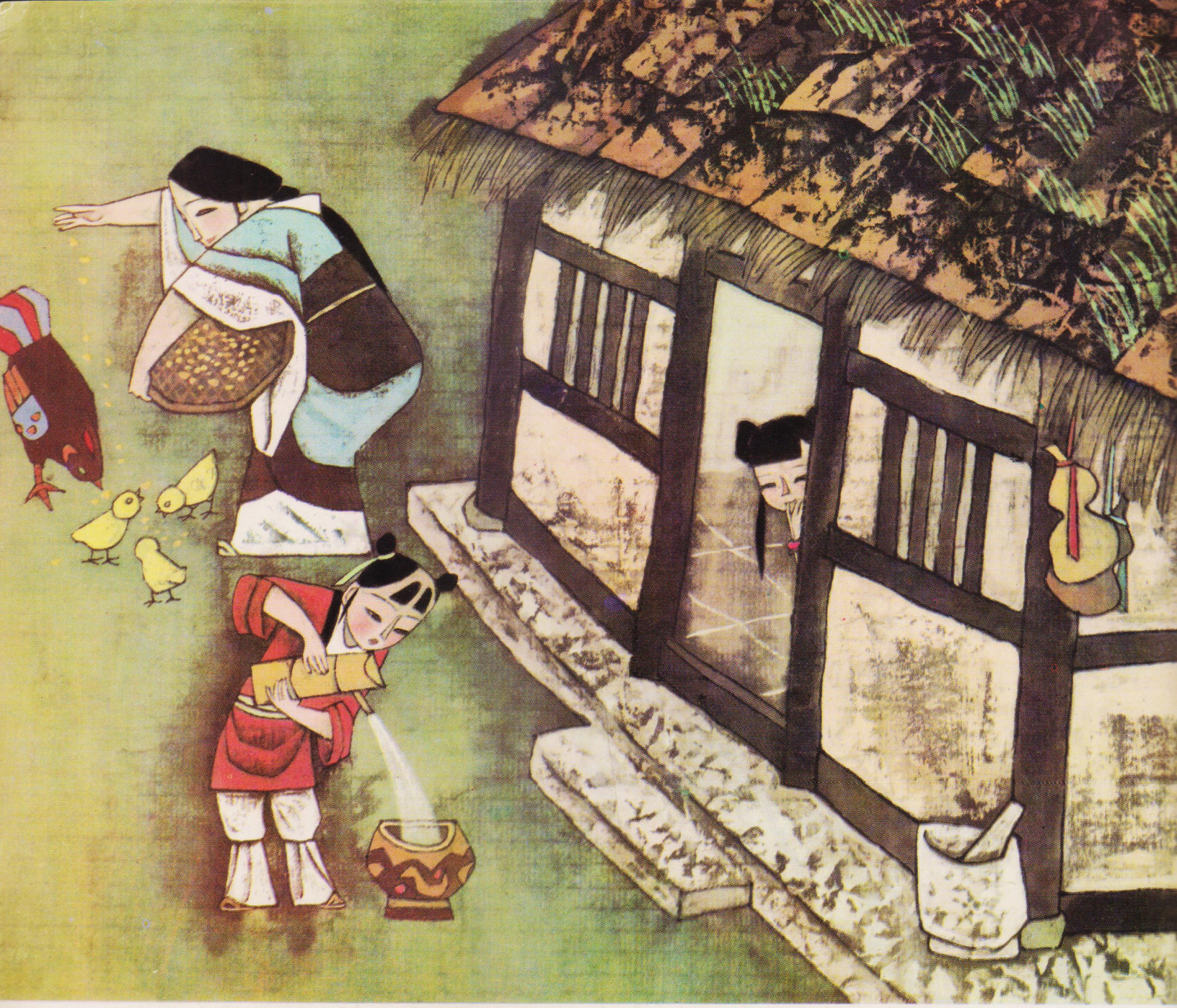
One day, the king issued an imperial edict: The children of the country come to the palace to get a flower seed. The child who can make the seed blossom within a year with the flower the king likes the best will be his successor.

This news caused great excitement throughout the land. All the parents wanted their children to be king, and all the children hoped they would be chosen.

Children from all over the country swarmed into the palace to get the flower seeds.

The last child to come was Song Jin. He had got the news later than anyone else because he had been helping his father with some farm work in the fields. So he got the last seed.

Back home, Song Jin filled one of his best flowerpots with rich soil, and planted the seed carefully into it.



He watered it every day. How he hoped the seed would sprout, branch out, and blossom with beautiful flowers!

Day after day passed, but nothing grew in the pot.

Song Jin was very worried. He transferred the seed to a bigger pot.

He put in new rich black soil.

Another two months passed. Still nothing happened in the pot.

The day had come. The children put their nice clothes on, and their faces looked like flowers in their joy.

They rushed to the palace with their beautiful fresh flowers. There were red flowers, yellow flowers, purple flowers and white flowers. The children waited to be chosen.

Song Jin was ashamed of his empty pot. He thought that the other children would laugh at him because he didn't know how to grow a flower.

His clever young sister made a suggestion: "We have so many beautiful flowers here at home. Choose the best one and present it to the king."

Song Jin shook his head. "Those flowers were planted by our parents, not me. I can't pretend they are mine."

His father overheard them. He praised Song Jin and said: "Any child who practises fraud is not a good child."

Holding the empty pot in his hand, Song Jin went straight to the palace.

The king came out and looked at the flowers slowly, one by one.

How beautiful those flowers were! But the king,frowning, did not say a word.

He finally came to Song Jin, who was hanging his head, wondering whether he would be punished.

The king asked him, "Boy, why did you bring a pot without a flower?"

Song Jin started to cry and replied, "I planted the seed you gave me, and I watered it every day. But it didn't ever sprout. So I had to bring this pot without any flower. It was the best I could do."

When the king heard that, he laughed heartily and said, "I have found him, I have finally found a boy who is worthy of being my successor."

It turned out that one of the king's seeds had been cooked, so it couldn't possibly sprout and blossom. Song Jin had gotten just that one. He was an honest child, which the king appreciated very much.

A Magic Cart

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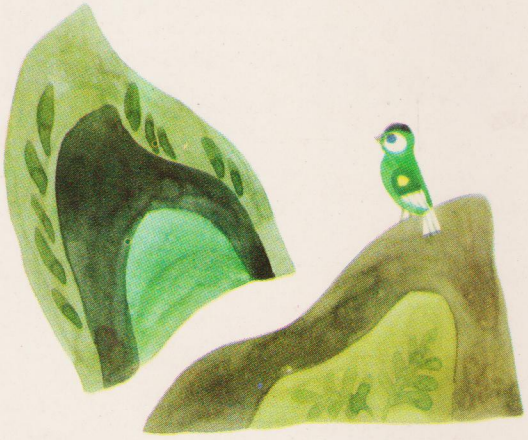
Illustrated by Hu Yongkai

DOLPHIN BOOKS BEIJING



In a village cottage lived a little girl named Weng Lingling and her mother. Her father worked in a town.

Lingling was a sensible girl and often helped her mother with the household work.

One day, her mother was ill and couldn't get out of bed. Early that morning Lingling set out for the mountain to collect firewood. She thought while she was walking, "I'll collect a lot of firewood, and then I'll pick a bunch of fresh flowers to make my mother happy. And I'll catch a big fish and cook a bowl of fish soup to make my mother well again."

Just then, a rabbit jumped out of the grass! Very frightened, it ran to Lingling and said, "Sister Lingling, help me! That eagle is going to eat me!"

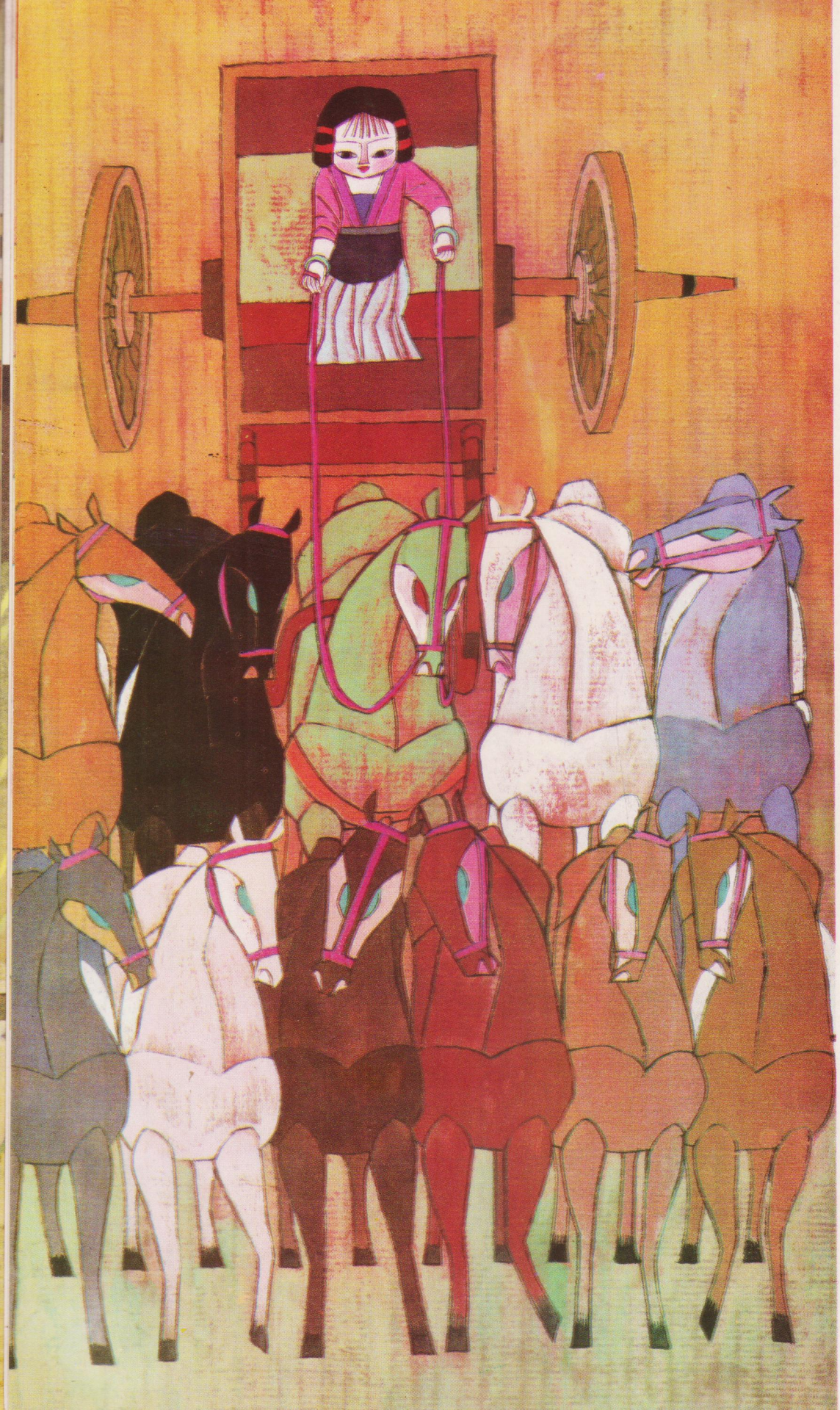
Lingling quickly picked up a stone and threw it at the eagle. The eagle was frightened away.

To thank Lingling, the rabbit took out many toys from his cave for her.

"Thank you very much," said Lingling, "but I don't have time to play with them. I have to collect firewood and prepare medicinal herbs for my mother."

"Sister Lingling, I'll give you a cart that will help you in your work." At that, a small cart pulled by eleven tiny horses appeared in front of Lingling.

Lingling accepted it gladly, but she wondered how she could get into such a small cart! At that, the cart suddenly grew big, and the eleven horses as well.



Happily, Lingling climbed into the cart and said to the horses, "Please drive me to a place with a lot of firewood."

The eleven horses raised their heads and whinnied. In the twinkling of an eye, they arrived at the mountain.

Lingling was very pleased to see that there was firewood everywhere. She gathered it quickly and the cart was soon filled up.

It was still early, so Lingling thought she would find an interesting place to play for a while. Immediately the eleven horses began to run.

They drove her to a beautiful place.

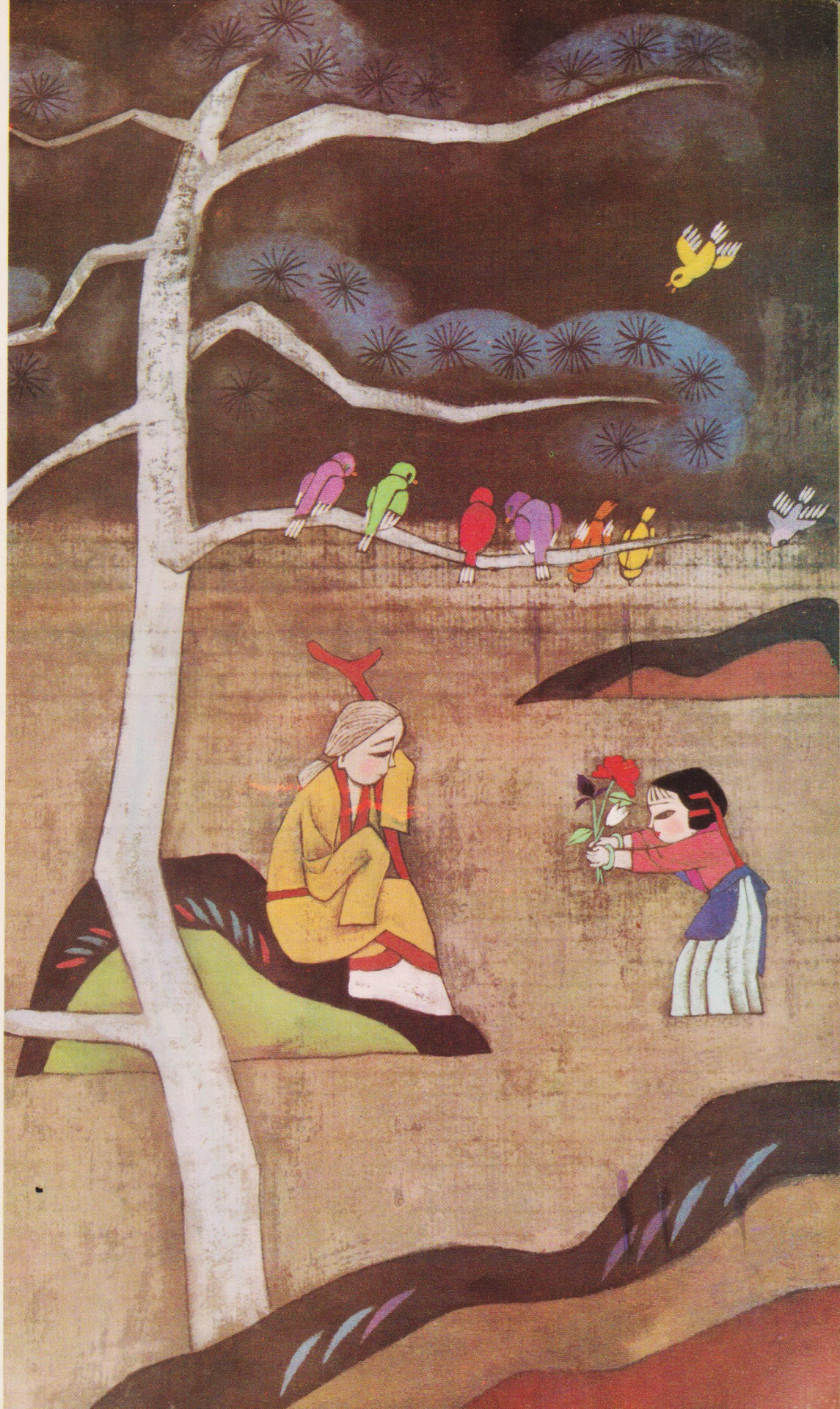
She plucked flowers while she was singing. Finally she had a whole bunch of pretty flowers to present to her mother.

Then she caught a carp in the river so she could make her mother some nourishing soup.

Lingling wanted to go home. The horses had already read her mind and began to pull the cart. Ding ling ling. . . ding ling ling. . . . Suddenly she caught sight of an old woman weeping at the side of the road.

Lingling stopped the horses and asked, "Grandma, why are you weeping?" "My daughter is dying of illness, and the doctor said that the smell of fresh flowers can help her," the old woman replied.

"Grandma, don't cry. I give you this bunch of flowers." So saying, she put the bouquet in the woman's hands.



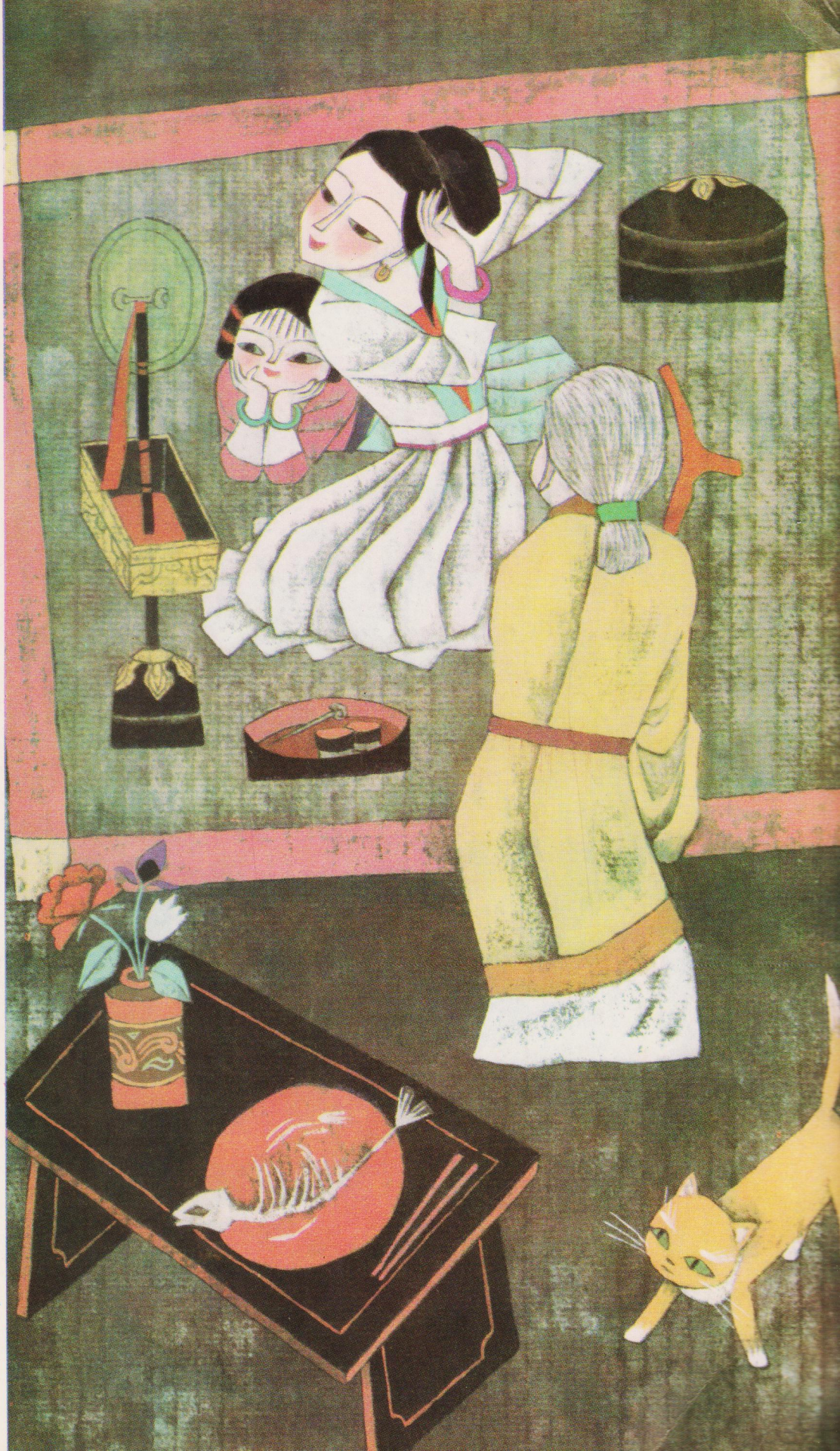
But the old woman still wept. "The flowers are not enough. She needs to eat a big carp too."

Lingling gave her fish to the old woman. But the woman still wept with grief.

"Grandma, why do you still weep?" Lingling asked. The woman replied, "The doctor told me that to save my daughter's life the carp should be cooked with a full cart of firewood."

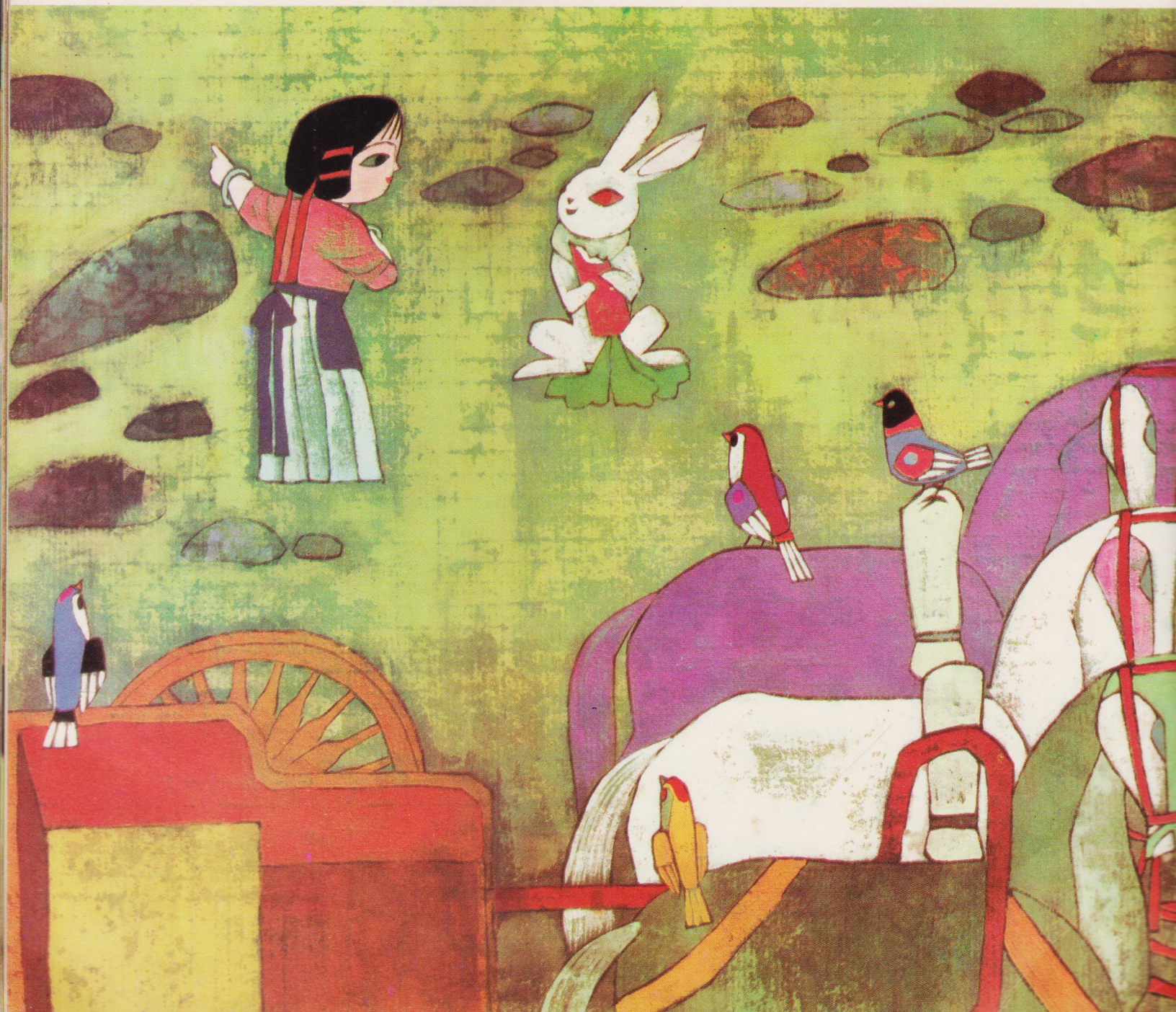
"Grandma, I give this cart of firewood to you. Please climb on!" The horses started running, and they soon arrived at the old woman's house.

The daughter of the old woman smelled the flowers and then ate the carp cooked with the firewood. She recovered completely.



The daughter of the old woman and Lingling became good friends. The old woman was very grateful to Lingling and invited her to stay for a few days. But Lingling insisted on going home to see her mother immediately.

On the way back Lingling ran into the rabbit again. The rabbit asked her, "Where are your firewood, flowers and carp?" Lingling told him the whole story.



When he heard what had happened, the rabbit called his friends together and ran back to the mountain. Soon all the rabbits returned, bringing a lot of firewood, a carp, and a bunch of flowers and put them on the cart.

Then the cart drawn by eleven horses went directly to Lingling's house. After smelling the flowers, her mother could sit up; and after eating the carp that Lingling had cooked with a cart of firewood, she was completely well again.

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